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Wen Wang Gua (文王卦) is a method of interpreting the results of I Ching divination that was first described in writing by Jing Fang in Han dynasty China (in and around the time of Christ). It is based on assigning trigram values to the Celestial stems and Earthly Branches of the Chinese calendar, and then using the stem and branch elements to interpret the lines of the trigrams and hexagrams of the I Ching.[1] The method is popular among professional I-Ching consultants in South East Asia (Hong Kong and Taiwan). It is known by various names: *Liu Yao* (six lines) refers to the fact that it interprets the meaning of six symbols; the *Najia method*, indicates its logic of elemental values derived from the Chinese calendar; *Wu Xing Yi* (changes of the five elements); or *Wen Wang Ke* (lessons of King Wen), which can refer to an actual King Wen (the author of the I Ching) or since 'Wen' can mean 'man' the meaning can be "lessons of sovereign man", a more metaphysical connotation

History

The name Wen Wang Gua means King Wen fortune telling hexagrams (or trigrams, since Gua can mean either one). King Wen of Zhou and his son were the supposed authors of the I-Ching as we know it, about a thousand years before Christ. The elemental qualification of the trigrams was not originally part of the tradition associated with King Wens' name, but seems to have been devised based on a trigram sequence described in the *Eighth Wing* (one of the *Ten Wings*, a series of appendixes to the I-Ching which are usually ascribed to Confucius). The uncertain origin of this scheme, not to mention the other possible associations of trigrams with elemental values (in accordance with the original trigram meanings), accounts for the obscurity that surrounds Wen Wang Gua, both in China and abroad, on the Internet and in print. However, the relevance of the use of element correlation theories at the time can be seen from the extant records, such as the Luxuriant Dew of the Spring and Autumn Annals, a compilation of earlier texts which was attributed to Dong Zhongshu. As one modern researcher remarks: "Dong Zhongshu is generally remembered as the author of a detailed system of correspondences in which everything was correlated to one of the five fundamental forces, so that everything could be shown to be interrelated in an orderly and comprehensible manner."[2] Jing Fang and his teacher, the author of the "Forest of Changes by Jiao", were among the first to apply this form of correlative thinking to I Ching divination.[3]

Trigram values

This is the text from section 5 of the *Eighth Wing*, an appendix to the I Ching, which relates the trigrams to the seasons of the year, and indirectly to the elements:

> "God comes forth in Kan (to His producing work); He brings (His processes) into full and equal action in Sun; they are manifested to one another in Li; the greatest service is done for Him in Khwan; He rejoices in Tui; He struggles in Khien; He is comforted and enters into rest in Khan; and He completes (the work of the year) in Kăn."[4]

Kan and Sun (☳ and ☴) correlate with wood, the first of the elements in the Chinese calendar, then Li (☲) with fire, Khwan (☷) with earth, Tui and Khien (☱ and ☰) with metal, and Khan (☵) with water. Thus the elements appear in their *generating sequence*, which correlates with the seasons of the year and the trigrams. The Kăn trigram (☷), correlating with earth, has been placed at the end of the sequence because in it is said that God has completed His work, and this must appear to us at the end, even if from the point of view His relation with creation the work was actually complete after Khwan, after the greatest service is done for Him and before He does His own rejoicing and struggling.



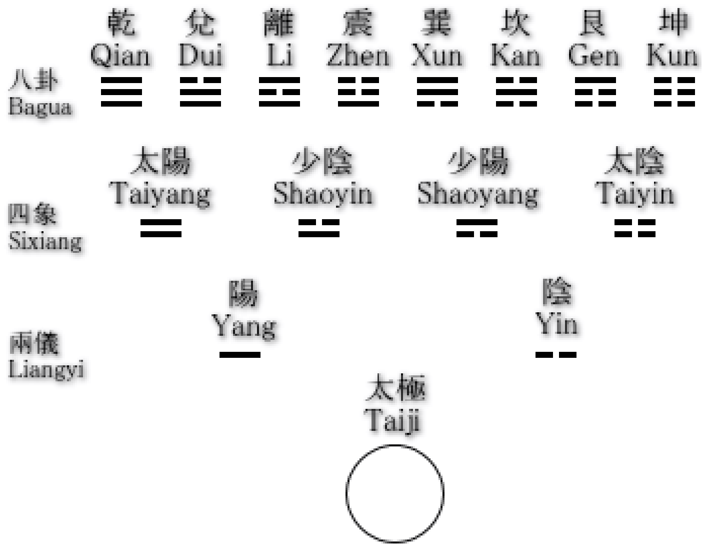
King Wen "Later Heaven" bagua arrangement, related to the Luoshu Square

Section 2 of the *Eighth Wing* relates line positions top, middle and bottom to Heaven, Man and Earth respectively. Lines are read from the bottom up.

The following diagram shows the trigram sequence traditionally attributed to Fu Xi. It first appears in the writings of Shao Yung in the eleventh century A.D.,[5] and seems to be a sequence of numbers in binary notation.



Fuxi "Earlier Heaven" bagua arrangement, related to the Yellow River Map



Considering yin and yang (⚋ and ⚊) as binary numbers 0 an 1, the yang lines' corresponding decimal numbers are: top: 1, middle: 2, and bottom: 4.

Element	metal	metal	fire	wood	wood	water	earth	earth
Trigrams	☰	☱	☲	☳	☴	☵	☶	☷
Binary number	111	110	101	100	011	010	001	000
Decimal number	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	0

Jing Fang

Larry James Schulz writes in his dissertation *Lai Chih-Te, (1525-1604) and the phenomenology of the "Classic of Change" (Yìjīng)*:

> "Jīng Fáng's is the name associated with the earliest appearance of numerous other explanatory and integrative devices, among them the systematic application of a hexagram's "nuclear trigrams (hùtǐ 互體 or zhōngyáo 中爻)" – lines two through four and three through five separately considered – to expound the hexagram's verbal properties; the "Eight Palaces (bā gōng 八宮)" system of arranging hexagrams (...); and incorporation of the Five Phases (wǔxíng 五行), the "heavenly stems (tiāngān 天干)", and the "earthly branches (dìzhī 地支)" designations to amplify the Change's linear figures in what is called the "nàjiǎ 納甲" theory."[6]

More about this system can be found in Fung Yu-lan's A History of Chinese Philosophy, Volume II.[7]

Line values

Jing Fang assigns stem and branch elements to the lines of the trigrams[1] (the trigrams as a whole already had their own element correspondences). The correspondences of the trigrams for the Celestial stems and Earthly Branches below indicate the elements for each line of the trigrams, as opposed to the trigrams as a whole.

Celestial stem	Trigram	Element
Jia 甲	☰	wood
Yi 乙	☷	
Bing 丙	☶	fire
Ding 丁	☱	
Wu 戊	☵	earth
Ji 己	☲	
Geng 庚	☳	metal
Xin 辛	☴	
Ren 壬	☰	water
Gui 癸	☷	

For the Earthly Branches the elements correspond to lines of the trigrams doubled over (hexagrams). The trigram ascription branch is used as a starting point for elements in yang or yin sequence, depending on the yin or yang value of the trigram. For example ☳ is a yang trigram, so the lines of the hexagram made by doubling it (no. 51) have elements of water, wood, earth, fire, metal, earth, corresponding to the yang sequence of branches beginning with Rat. According to the Celestial stems, each line of the hexagram has also has an element value of metal. Whenever a hexagram has a ☳ trigram, if it is a bottom one, the values of the bottom trigram of the 51 hexagram are used, if it is a top one, the values of the top one are used. The values of the yin trigrams are determined in the same way, except that the yin value sequence is inverted (instead of going forward one goes backward). Therefore the values of the no. 2 hexagram, made by doubling the ☷ trigram, for example, are earth, fire, wood, earth, water, metal. In the case of the ☰ and ☷ trigrams, since they appear twice in the Celestial stems, if they are a bottom trigram they have the value of its first appearance, and if they are a top one that of the next appearance. So the lines of the bottom trigram of the no. 2 hexagram are wood and the lines of the top trigram are water.

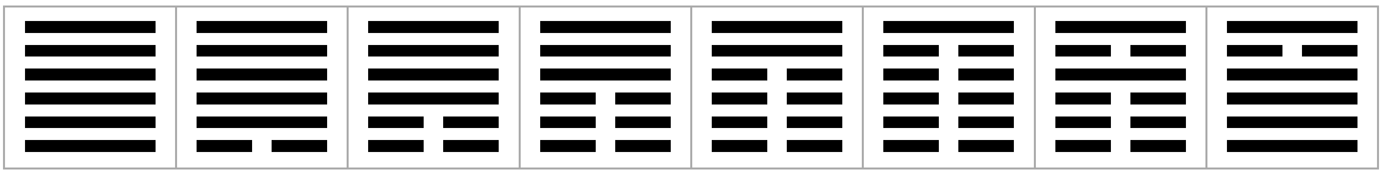
	Earthly Branch	Mandarin name	Chinese zodiac	Trigram	Element
1	子	zǐ	Rat	☰,☳	water
2	丑	chǒu	Ox	☴	earth
3	寅	yín	Tiger	☵	wood
4	卯	mǎo	Rabbit	☲	wood
5	辰	chén	Dragon	☶	earth
6	巳	sì	Snake	☱	fire
7	午	wǔ	Horse	yang	fire
8	未	wèi	Goat	☷	earth
9	申	shēn	Monkey	yang	metal
10	酉	yǒu	Rooster	yin	metal
11	戌	xū	Dog	yang	earth
12	亥	hài	Pig	yin	water

Eight houses

Eight houses is a way of assigning the elements to the hexagrams. This is used to identify the line which contains the same element as the hexagram as a whole and establish an order and importance of relationships among the hexagrams lines. There are different ways of arranging the houses in relation to each other.

Each house begins with a hexagram made by a double trigram. Then lines 1 thru 5 are changed to produce the first 6 hexagrams, then the fourth line of hexagram 6 is changed to produce hexagram 7, and changing the first three lines of hexagram 7 produces hexagram 8. These eight hexagrams are of the same element as the original hexagram that was made by doubling a trigram.

For example, this is the house of the first hexagram:



Mei Hua Yi

Associated with the name of Shao Yung, the Mei Hua Yi (Plum Flower Changes) system uses actual Chinese calendar date numbers to obtain hexagrams. The interpretation of them however relies on the Wen Wang Gua trigram values rather than the line values.

Ho Lo Li Shu

Also said to originate with Shao Yung, the Ho Lo Li Shu (Ho Map Li Writing) system is in a sense the opposite of Mei Hua, in that it is the Wen Wang Gua calendar correspondences of trigrams that are used to obtain the hexagrams. It is a complex numerical system, with its own unique way of interpreting the results.[8]

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